

Apr. 25 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the National
Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in
Colombia

April 17, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia that was declared in Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1995.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 25.

Remarks in New Orleans, Louisiana

April 25, 2001

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. It's an honor to be here. This ballpark kind of reminds me of home. And seeing my friend Will Clark, who used to play for the mighty Texas Rangers, it really reminded me of home. I want to thank you for being here, Will.

I also want to thank my friend David Vitter, the great Congressman from this district, for his introduction. I'm pleased to have been traveling today, as well, with the Congressman from northern Louisiana, John Cooksey. I appreciate John being here. And you should appreciate them, as well, because when it came to trying to figure out what to do with the people's money, they stood strong for tax relief.

At the airport when I arrived, it was good to see my old friend and fellow Governor, the Governor of Louisiana, Michael Foster. And with Mike was a friend of mine, the elections commissioner of the State of Louisiana, Suzie Haik Terrell. It's good to see Suzie, as well. Just to make it clear that tax relief is not necessarily a Republican

idea or a Democrat idea, today I'm proud that Karen Carter and Lambert Boissiere, both good elected Democrats here in the State of Louisiana, stand in this crowd in solid support of tax relief on behalf of the working people.

And finally, before I get going, there are two folks here who I'm glad they're here—I wish I would have been here to hear them sing—Mr. Percy Sledge and Aaron Neville.

After this, I'm going to Arkansas, and then I'm going to spend a couple of days in my State of Texas. I'll be spending some quality time with the First Lady, and she's going to be envious to know that I got to shake Percy Sledge and Aaron Neville's hand.

By the way, I'm proud of the job that Laura is doing. One of the things she is doing is traveling our country, reminding people of how important it is to be a teacher, telling the teachers of this good land how much we appreciate them, but also telling those young and old alike that if

you're looking for something to do, if you want to make a contribution to our Nation, become a teacher. Teaching is a noble profession. And there is something very fundamental about making a contribution to our Nation.

The truth of the matter is, if you want to start making a great contribution to our Nation, if you happen to be a mom or a dad, remember this: The most important job you'll ever have is to be a good mom and dad. If you have the honor of being a mother or a father, the most important contribution you can make to this land is to every day tell your child you love them with all your heart and all your soul.

I wish I knew the law that I could sign that would say we would love each other like we'd like to be loved ourself. There's no such law. But there are some laws we can pass to help people with their lives. And that's exactly the kind of budget I submitted to the United States Congress. It's a Congress that's focused and principled. It's a budget that says we could spend more money on the public's education system around America. It's a budget that prioritizes education.

The biggest increase of any budget—of any Department in my budget goes to the Department of Education. It signals a priority. But I haven't forgotten where I come from, either. I know that Washington doesn't have all the knowledge necessary to run the schools. As a matter of fact, I'm against mandates. I'm for freedom at the local level. I believe in local control of our schools.

We're making progress. We're making progress, and I appreciate so very much the cooperative efforts of both Republicans and Democrats in Washington to craft a bill that embodies these principles. First, we've got to set high standards when it comes to educating our children. Everybody understands that if you set low standards, you get low results. When you raise the bar, when you expect the best is when

you start getting the kind of results we want in America.

Secondly, embodied in the principle involved in the bill that I submitted and we're working on, it says we've got to trust the local people to run the schools in America. It says we've got to trust the local people to make the decisions for children. The people who care more about the children in Louisiana are the citizens of Louisiana, and we must empower the citizens to make that choice.

But also a principle in the bill that's working its way through the Senate says that we want to know results in America. We've got to know. We don't want the Federal Government setting up a test, but we want local people to devise accountability systems that let us know whether or not our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. It is so important that we measure. It is important to use measurement not as a way to punish but as a way to solve problems early, before it's too late.

I refuse to accept a system that will not hold people accountable, a system that will just shuffle through children through the system without regard to their knowledge base. Now, we can do better in America. We can do better by asking the question to our children: "What do you know?" And if you don't know what you're supposed to know, we will make sure you do early, before it's too late. No child should be left behind in the great land called America.

In the budget I submitted to the United States Congress, I sent this priority: We better make sure we pay the people who wear the uniform of the United States a decent wage. I have the awesome responsibility of being the Commander in Chief of the United States, and that means making sure that morale is high amongst our troops. That means good pay; that means good housing; that means good training. And that means having a Commander in Chief who respects the men and women

who wear the uniform and who, in turn, earns the respect of the men and women who wear the uniform. [Applause]

Behave yourself. [Laughter]

There's always a lot of talk when it comes to the budget, that if we try to share the people's money with them, that somebody is not going to get their Social Security check. Hopefully, these days of that kind of rhetoric are gone from the political discourse. Hopefully, the days of trying to scare people, days of trying to frighten people are behind us. That kind of politics is divisive and unnecessary.

The reality is, the budget I submitted and the budget most people agree with—this part of the budget most people agree with—says that we will spend payroll taxes, those taxes aimed for Social Security, on one thing and one thing only, and that is Social Security.

We have made a commitment to our elderly in America. It is a commitment this administration will keep. But if you're young in America, you better be wondering what the Social Security system is going to look like tomorrow. There's not going to be enough people paying in by the time you get to need Social Security. We've got to think differently. On the one hand, we're going to protect our seniors. But on the other hand, we better let younger workers, at their discretion, manage some of your own money in the private market so you get a better rate of return on investment.

There's a lot of concern about the health of our seniors, as there should be. The budget I submitted doubles the Medicare budget over the next 10 years. It doubles the amount of folks who will be served at community health centers over the next 5 years. It provides tax credits for the working uninsured. This is a good budget. It is a sound budget. And it meets the Nation's priorities.

It increases discretionary spending by 4 percent. That ought to seem like a lot for people whose pay raise hasn't gone up by 4 percent over the last couple of years.

Four percent is greater than the rate of inflation; 4 percent is a hefty increase. But for some in Washington, 4 percent is not enough.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. For some in our Nation's Capital, they don't think 4 percent can meet the Nation's needs. And that's where we're having a major disagreement. The truth of the matter is, the budget last year grew at—the discretionary budget last year grew at 8 percent. The bill that came out of the Senate, again, grows the discretionary spending by 8 percent. And if that were to continue, the discretionary budget of the United States of America would double in 9 years.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There's a fundamental argument going on in Washington, DC, and it's, what do we do with the people's money? That's what the argument is about. And my point I make to Washington is, after we meet priorities and grow the budget at 4 percent, we ought to be understanding where that money comes from. The surplus isn't the Government's money. The surplus is the people's money. Let me make the case a little further.

We increase discretionary spending by 4 percent. As well, in the budget I submitted to the Congress, we pay down debt by \$2 trillion over 10 years. We've also got another trillion set aside for contingencies. Oh, there are contingencies all the time when it comes to the Federal level. There are emergencies. Sometimes our farmers need a little extra help because of emergencies. And we're going to meet those obligations. This is a sound budget. It leaves money unspent. That's always dangerous when it comes to Washington, DC, leaving money unspent. [Laughter]

I was campaigning on this very issue in Iowa, and a lady got up and she said, "You know, the budget debate in Washington reminds me of what it was like when I had my grandchildren in the house." And I said, "Well, why was that?" And she said, "Well,

because I always made cookies. And when I left the cookies on the kitchen table and the grandchildren came through, they always got eaten.” [Laughter] “They were never left.”

Well, that’s what happens to U.S. taxpayers’ money. If you leave it sitting around in Washington, it’s going to get spent. And it’s going to get spent on bigger Government. What we need to do is set priorities and always remember whose money we’re talking about. And so I submitted a plan that does just that. And the two Congressmen with me today, they stood strong on the side of the working people in Louisiana and voted for that tax relief.

What you hear in Washington is—a lot of times you hear people saying, “Well, I’m for tax relief, just so long as only a certain number of people get it.” That’s right. That’s what we call targeted tax relief. That means somebody in Washington gets to pick the winners, and somebody gets to pick who doesn’t win. That is not our view of fair tax relief. Everybody who pays taxes ought to get tax relief in America.

So ours says, everybody who pays taxes gets relief. We cut all rates. We cut the bottom rate from 15 percent to 10 percent. That’s important, because there are people in America struggling on the outskirts of poverty. There are people working hard that aren’t getting ahead. And not only did we cut the bottom rate, we increased the child credit from \$500 to \$1,000 per child.

One of the things that troubles me most about our Tax Code is—the example I like to use is a single mother, working hard to get ahead. By the way, she’s working the hardest job in America. Raising children by herself is the toughest job in this country. Under this Tax Code, if she’s barely getting ahead making 22,000 a year, say, raising two children, for every additional dollar she earns, she pays a higher marginal rate on that dollar than someone who is a successful Wall Street stockbroker, for example. And that’s just not right, folks. That’s not what this country is about.

The message in the Tax Code ought to be, the harder you work, the better it is the chance you’ve got to get ahead in life. And so we reduced the bottom rate, and we increased the child credit. This code needs to be more fair.

But there’s a lot of them up there saying, “Well, you can’t drop the top rate. That’s not fair.” Well, first, if you pay taxes, you ought to get relief.

And secondly, you can help me send this message to Washington: The small-business owner in the State of Louisiana is likely to be a sole proprietor; he’s likely to be a Subchapter S; generally, he’s not going to pay corporate income taxes. Therefore, he’s going to be paying personal income tax rates. By dropping that top rate from 39.6 to 33 percent, we’re sending this message: The role of Government is not to create wealth, but the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which the small business can grow to become a large business. Dropping that top rate sends the clear message: We want more money in the pockets of the small-business owners so they can expand and grow their businesses.

The Tax Code we submitted makes the Tax Code more fair. It addresses inequities. It makes the code more responsive to hard work. But it also recognizes the role of family in society. The marriage penalty is unfair, and we’ve got to do something about taxing marriage in America.

And you know what else is unfair? Taxing a person’s assets twice. In our country, called America, if you’re a farmer or a rancher or a small-business owner and you pass away, your heirs have to pay taxes twice. They pay taxes when you get profitable, and they pay taxes when you die. The death tax is unfair, and for the goodness of America, we need to get rid of it.

Now, that’s the plan I submitted. Now, when I was campaigning in Louisiana during the campaign, I came and talked like this, and a lot of people heard it and

cheered. But I must confess, a lot of the punditry kind of had a blank stare on their face. They thought I was, as they say, whistling into the wind—[laughter]—that there was no chance we would get any tax relief.

But thanks to the hard work and the phone calls and e-mails of hundreds of Americans from across the country, we have begun to define the parameters. Out of the House came a \$1.6 trillion plan. And now the Senate, somewhat reluctant, but nevertheless they passed a \$1.2 trillion plan. Because of you all, because of the voices of America, tax relief is on the way.

And there's two important reasons why it must happen. The first is, we have a little slowdown in our economy, and tax relief will help. It's a part of how we recover the steam necessary to get our economy chugging again. And I'm confident with tax relief, we'll send a message—one, it will encourage long-term investment, but the tax relief package I look forward to working with the Senate and the House on will also have a retroactive feature to it, will get money in people's pockets quickly. It'll help recover this economy. And it's necessary. It is necessary.

But there is another reason. It has to do with the people. You know, sometimes with public policy we like to talk about ideology and numbers and charts. But behind every good public policy is the question, how do we help people?

Today, in the crowd, we've got the Rogelstads, somewhere behind—there they go, right there. And I've asked them to come—it's Katie and Dustin. Katie is a receptionist; Dustin is a sales rep. More importantly, they're a mom and dad of Lawson and Karli. They've come for a reason, because I want to share with you what happens to this one Louisiana family when we have tax relief—the Congress passes the plan that the House passed. And when it's fully implemented, these good folks who now pay 3,390 in Federal income taxes will save \$1,850 a year. You know, some will say, well, you know, that's 1,850—that may

not be a lot for—but that's a lot for them. It's a lot for them, given the fact that we've had no energy policy in America and therefore energy prices are going up on the American people. It's a lot for people who struggle with credit card debt.

Now, this tax relief package, we're talking about live Americans who will benefit in a real way. You see, and the question is—and this is the fundamental question facing Washington, DC—once we meet fundamental obligations and pay down debt, once we increase discretionary spending by 4 percent, what do we do with the money left over?

The other way to look at it is, who do you trust? Do you want the Congress spending this \$1,850, or do you want these people spending the 18? And we stand on the side of the families in Louisiana. It's who do you trust: Do you trust the Government, or do you trust the people? And you've got an administration that stands squarely on the side of the people of America.

And not only do I trust you when it comes to your own money; I trust you when it comes to asking for your help and maybe convincing some of the members of the Louisiana delegation who don't see it our way, to see it our way. You're one e-mail away from letting somebody know how you feel. You're one stamp away from saying, "Meet priorities, but trust us with our own money. Meet priorities, but remember whose money it is you're spending up there."

You see, we can not only afford tax relief, but my point to the Congress is, we can't afford not to have tax relief. It is so important to trust the people of America, because that's why our Nation is so different and strong, because of our people.

This is a fabulous country, and I'm so honored—I'm so honored to be your President. I'm able to stand up—I'm the President of the greatest people on the face of the Earth, hard-working, God-fearing people, people who walk outside their

house on a regular basis and say to a neighbor in need, "What can I do to help?" They don't need the Federal Government telling them how to love a neighbor; they do it out of the goodness of their heart. No, this is a land that is so strong because every single day there are countless acts of kindness where neighbor helps neighbor, or church member says to a child who wonders whether or not there's a future for him or her, "Somebody loves you."

My call to America and to the Congress is, let's free the good hearts of the American people. Let's not stand in the way of faith-based and community-based programs that are trying to help people in need. Let's unleash—let us unleash not only the creative passions of America through tax relief; let's unleash the compassion of America through a Faith-Based Initiative that recognizes the great strength of our country lies in the hearts and souls of our loving citizens.

We're making a difference in Washington—I say "we" because I stand up there with you all—that there's a new attitude in our Nation's Capital. We've still got a lot of work to do. But it's an attitude of respect. We need to have debates with

the people in mind, not debates trying to say, "My party is better than your party," or debates that say, "Well, I'm going to tear this person down so I can do better." That's not what America should be about.

Slowly but surely, we're ushering in a culture of respect in the Nation's Capital. It's important to do so. And as importantly, all of us must work together to usher in a culture of personal responsibility into America, a culture that says each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life, responsible for loving our children, responsible for helping a neighbor in need. And I understand my responsibilities, which is to uphold the high honor of the great office of President of the United States.

So I want to thank you all for coming out. I am honored to have you by my side. Let's work hard, and we're going to bring tax relief where it belongs, to the people of America.

God bless, and God bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. at Zephyr Field. In his remarks, he referred to former Major League Baseball player Will Clark.

Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Clean Up Brownfields *April 25, 2001*

I am pleased that the Senate has passed legislation to clean up the Nation's brownfields. Environmental reforms must set high standards and get results. This legislation will allow communities to reduce environmental and health risks, capitalize

on existing infrastructure, and create jobs. I commend the Senate for their bipartisan approach to this important environmental reform.